

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

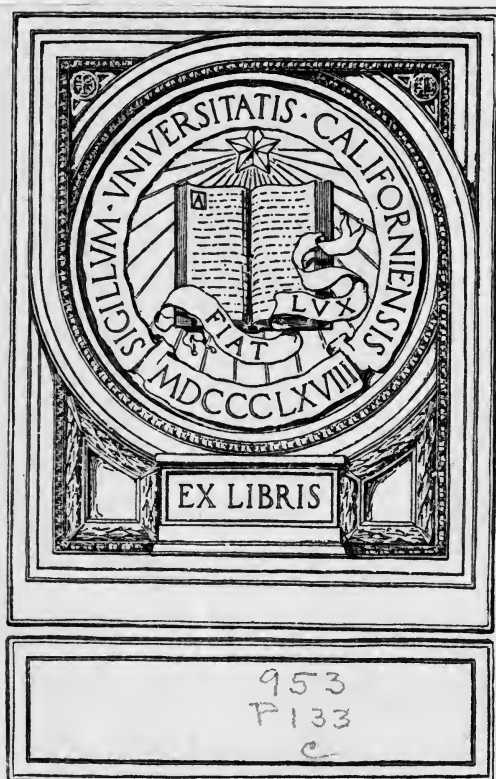
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THE COAST OF BOHEMIA



THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

BY
THOMAS NELSON PAGE



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1906

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THE DE VINNE PRESS

PREFACE

ONE who after writing prose all his life suddenly essays to launch a volume of verse, must know something of the feeling with which an old-time sailor after coasting only his native shores found himself setting sail into an unknown sea.

The author of this little volume knows quite as well as the most experienced mariner the temerity of sailing an untried main in so frail a bark. But he is willing, if the Fates so decree, to go down with the unnumbered sail of that great fleet which have throughout the ages faced the wide ocean of oblivion, merely for the thrill of being for a brief space on its vast waters.

Since Horace, secure in the double endowment of genius and of an Emperor's favor, wrote scornfully how hated of gods and men was middling verse, no one has ever doubted the fact—perhaps, not even one of all the myriads who have dared to brave that bitter scorn. The explanation then for the production of

PREFACE

so much of the despised matter must be that there is for the minor poet also a music that the outer world does not catch—an inner day which the outer world does not see. It is this music, this light which, for the most part, is for the lesser poet his only reward. That he has heard, however brokenly, and at however vast a distance, snatches of those strains which thrilled the souls of Marlowe and Milton and Keats and Shelley, even though he may never reproduce one of them, is moreover a sufficiently high reward.

T. N. P.

* * * Most of the poems in the following pages, with the exception of those in dialect, are now published for the first time.

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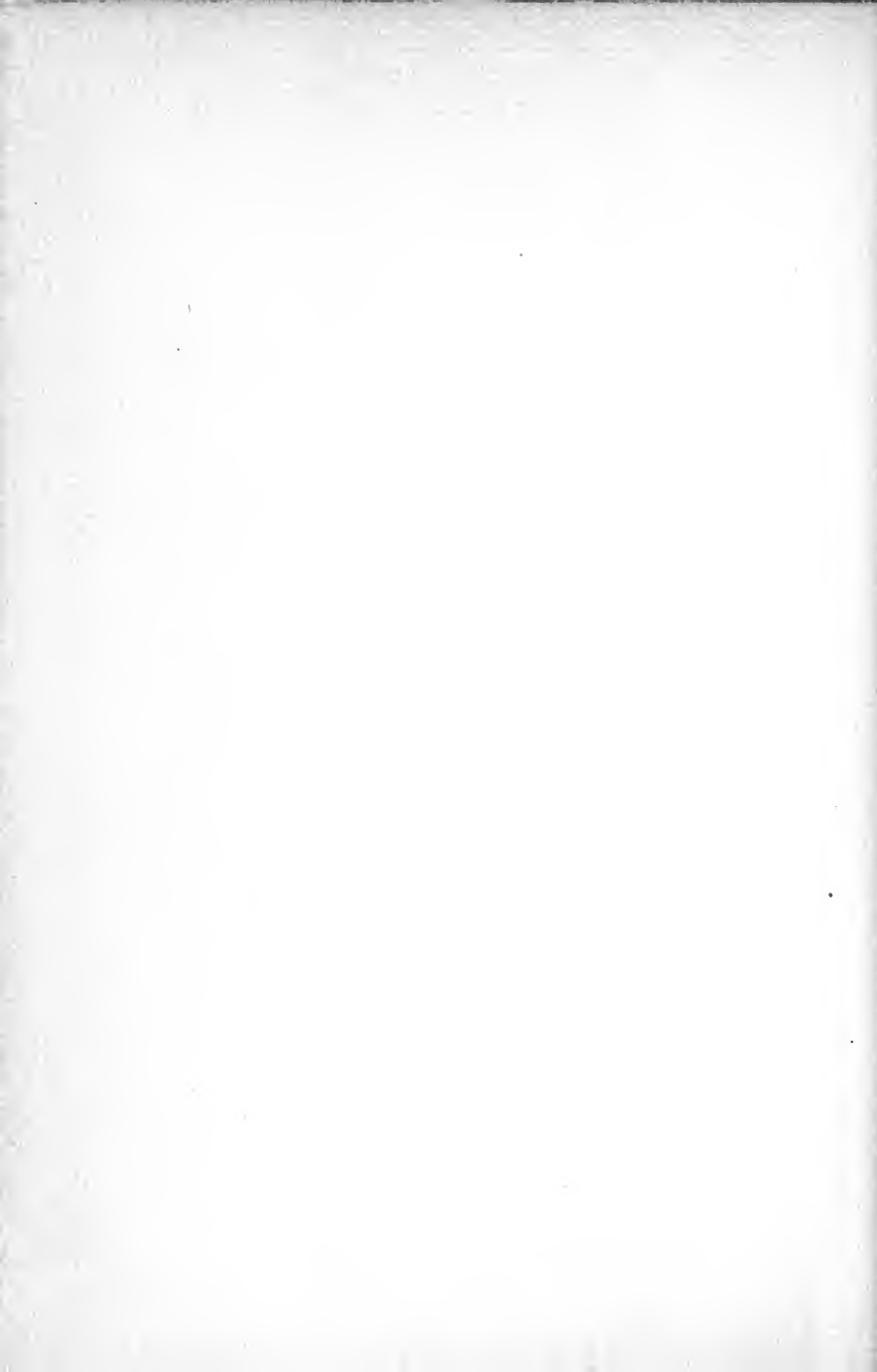
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THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

. . . . "Few, few are they :
Perchance, among a thousand, one
Thou shouldest find, for whom the sun
Of Poesy makes an inner day."

—*The Medea of Euripides—Way's Translation.*

DEDICATION

TO F. L. P.

AS one who wanders in a lonely land,
 Through all the blackness of a stormy night,
 Now stumbling here, now falling there outright,
 And doubts if it be worse to stir or stand,
 Not knowing what abysses yawn at hand,
 What torrents roar beyond some beetling height;
 Yet scales the top to find the dawn in sight,
 And Earth kissed into radiance with its wand:
 So, wandering hopeless in the darkness, I,
 Scarce recking whither led my painful way,
 Or whether I should faint or strive to prove
 If 'yond the mountain-top some path might lie,
 Climbed boldly up the steep, and lo! the Day
 Broke into pearl and splendor in thy love.

TO THE
ADVERTISING



THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

THERE is a land not charted on all charts;
Though many mariners have touched its coast,
Who far adventuring in those distant parts,
Meet ship-wreck there and are forever lost;
Or if they e'er return, are soon once more
Borne far away by hunger for that magic shore.

Its mystic mountains on the horizon piled,
Some mariners have glimpsed when driven far
Out of life's measured course by tempests wild,
Or lured therefrom by the erratic star
They chose as pilot, till their errant guide
Drew them resistlessly within its witching tide.

For oft, they tell, who know its sapphire strand
The golden haze enfolding it hangs low,
And those who careless steer may miss the land,
Embosomed in the sunset's purple glow,

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

Its lights mistaken for the evening stars,
Its music for the surf-beat on its golden bars.

Young Jason found it when he dauntless sought
The golden fleece by Colchis' perilous stream,
And in his track full many an argonaut
Hath found the rare fleece of his golden dream,
And at the last, Ulysses-like, surcease
From Sorrow's dole and Labor's heavy prease.

One voyager charted it for every age,
From azure rim to starry mountain core.
A nameless player on the World's great stage,
He spread his sails, adventured to that shore
And reared a pharos with his art sublime,
Like Ilion's song-wrought towers, to beacon every
clime.

The great adventurers reached it when they brake
Columbus-led into the unknown West,
And those who followed in their shining wake,
But left no trace of where their keels have pressed;
Yet have through stress of storm and tempests' rage
Won by his quenchless light a happy anchorage.

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

There rest the heroes of lost causes lorn,
On their calm brows more fadeless chaplets far
Than all their conquerors' could e'er adorn,
When shone effulgent Fame's ascendant star;
There fallen patriots reap the glorious prize
Of deathless memory of their precious sacrifice.

There many a dream-faced maid and matron dwells,
From Argive Helen on through gliding time;
There drink the poets draughts from crystal wells,
And choir high music to their harps sublime:
And there the great philosophers discourse
Divine Philosophy in due and tranquil course.

There not alone the great and lofty sing;
But silent poets too find there the song
They only sang in dreams when wandering
Amazed and lost amid the earthly throng;
Their hearts unfettered all from worldly fears.
Attuned to meet the spacious music of the spheres:

Gray, wrinkled men, the sea-salt in their hair,
Their eyes set deep with peering through the gloom,
Their voices low with speaking ever, where

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

The surges break beneath the mountains' loom;
But deep within their yearning, burning eyes
The light reflected ever from those radiant skies.

There fadeless Youth, unknowing of annoy,
Walks aye with changeless Love; and Sorrow there
Is but a memory to hallow Joy,
With chastened Happiness so deep and rare,
Well-nigh the Heart aches with its rich content,
And Hope with full fruition evermore is blent.

Constant Penelope, her web complete,
Rests there content at last and smiling down
On worn Ulysses basking at her feet;
Calm Beatrice wears joyously the crown
Bestowed by exiled Dante in his grief,
And Laura, kind, gives Petrarch's tuneful heart relief.

'Mid bloomy meadows laved by limpid streams,
Repose the Muses and the Graces sweet;
There kiss we lips we only kissed in dreams
Meshed in the grosser world; and there we meet
The fair and flower-like lost loves of our Youth,
When unafraid we trod the ways with radiant Truth.

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

Those who return have pressed alone the coast;
But tell of some lost in that charmèd strond:
Aspiring souls who loving Honor most,
Have sought the crystal mountain-tops beyond,
And striven upward, heedless of their scars,
To where all paths lead ever to the shining stars.

THE VOICE OF THE SEA

THUS spake to Man the thousand-throated Sea;
Words which the stealing winds caught from
its lips:

Thou thinkest thee and thine, God's topmost crown.
But hearken unto me and humbly learn
How infinite thine insignificance.

Thou boastest of thine age—thy works—thyself:
Thine oldest monuments of which thou pratt'st
Were built but yesterday when measured by
Yon snow-domed mountains of eternal rock:
The Earth, thy mother, from whose breast thou
draw'st,

The sweat-stained living which she wills to give,
And in whose dust thine own must melt again,
Was aged cycles ere thine earliest dawn;—
But they to me are young: I gave them birth.

THE VOICE OF THE SEA

Climb up those heaven-tipt peaks thy dizziest height,
Thou there shalt read, graved deep, my name and age;
Dig down thy deepest depth, shalt read them still.
Before the mountains sprang, before the Earth,
Thy cradle and thy tomb, was made, I was:
God called them forth from me, as thee from Earth.
Thou burrow'st through a mountain, here and there,
Work'st all thine engines, cutting off a speck;
I wash their rock-foundations under; tear
Turret from turret, toppling thundering down,
And crush their mightiest fragments into sand:
Thou gravest with thy records slab and spar,
And callest them memorials of thy Might;—
Lo! not a stone exists, from yon black cliff
To that small pebble at thy foot, but bears
My signature graved there when Earth was young,
To teach the mighty wonders of the Deep.
Thy deeds—thysel—what? A morning mist!
But I! I face the ages. Dost not know
That as I gave the Earth to spread her fair
And dew-washed body in the morning light,
So, still, 't is I that keep her fair and fresh?—
That weave her robes and nightly diamond them?
I fill her odorous bowers with perfumes rare;

THE VOICE OF THE SEA

Strew field and forest with bee-haunted stars;
I give the Morn pearl for her radiant roof,
And Eve lend glory for her rosy dome;
I build the purple towers that hold the West
And guard the passage of Retiring Day.
Thy frailest fabric far outlasts thyself:
The pyramids rise from the desert sands,
Their builders blown in dust about their feet.
The wingèd bull looms mid an alien race,
Grim, silent, lone. But whither went the King?
I cool the lambent air upon my breast,
And send the winds forth on mine embassies;
I offer all my body to the Sun,
And lade our caravans with merchandise,
To carry wealth and plenty to all climes.
Yon fleecy continents of floating snow,
That dwarf the mountains over which they sail,
Are but my bales borne by my messengers,
To cheer and gladden every thirsty land.
The Arab by his palm-girt desert pool,
The Laplander above his frozen rill,
The Woodsman crouched beside his forest brook,
The shepherd mirrored in his upland spring,
Drink of my cup in one great brotherhood.

THE VOICE OF THE SEA

'T is, nay, not man alone—thou art but one
Of all the myriads of life-holding things,—
Brute, beast, bird, reptile, insect, thing unnamed,
Whose souls find recreation in my breath:
Nay, not a tree, flower, sprig of grass or weed,
But lives through me and hymns my praise to God:
I feed, sustain, refresh and keep them all:
Mirror and type of God that giveth life.
I sing as softly as a mother croons
Her drowsy babe to sleep upon her breast.
On quiet nights when all my winds are laid,
I wile the stars down from their azure home
To sink with golden footprints in my depths:
I show the silvered pathway to the moon,
All paved with gems the errant Pleiad lost,
That night she strayèd from her sisters wan;
But I sing other times strains from that song
Before whose awfulness my waters sank,
And at whose harmony the mountains rose,
I heard that morning when the breath of God
Moved on my face, and said, Let there be light!
I thrill and tremble since but at the thought
Of that great wonder of that greatest dawn,
When at God's word the brooding darkness rose,

THE VOICE OF THE SEA

Which veiled my face from all the birth of things
And rolled far frightened from its resting-place,
To bide henceforth beyond Day's crystal walls,
While all the morning stars together sang,
And on the instant God stood full revealed!

LONG ROLL AT NAPOLEON'S TOMB

'T WAS the marble crypt where the Emperor lay,
His mighty marshals on either side,
Guarding his couch since the solemn day
France brought him home in her chastened pride,
To sleep on her heart, from the sea-girt cage
Where the Eagle pined and died in his rage.

I thought of the long, red carnival
Death held in the track of his sword, amain,
From Toulon's bloom to the crimsoned pall
He spread upon Waterloo's ripened grain;
I thought of the long black years of dread
When the nations quaked at his armies' tread.

A-sudden above as the twilight fell
The deathly silence around was shocked
By the roll of a drum. At the throbbing swell
The vaulted dome of the Heavens rocked,
Till it seemed that the mighty conqueror's soul
Was shaking the earth in that drum's long roll.

LONG ROLL AT NAPOLEON'S TOMB

In the purple glooming the spell was wrought;
And forth from their tomb the legions sprang:
A Cadmus-brood of a Master's thought;
The long-roll beat and the bugles sang;
The tattered standards again unfurled,
And Napoleon once more bestrid the world.

I heard that instant the self-same drum
Which beat at his call when France arose
From her ashes and blood when he bade her come
In Liberty's name to face her foes;
I saw her invincible armies arise,
The light of Liberty in their eyes.

O'er Tyranny's pyre her standards flew;
I felt the thrill of the new-born life:
As cleansed from Terror, France the true,
Sprang forth rejoicing amid the strife,
As a woman rejoiceth travail-torn
At the living voice of her own first-born.

From the ruddy morning on Egypt's sands,
When her eagles rose in their terrible flight
To stretch their shadow across the lands
Till it perished in Russia's frozen night,

LONG ROLL AT NAPOLEON'S TOMB

When th' insatiable conqueror's reckoning came
And his Empire melted away in flame :

When there at Moscow the Lord God spoke
And said, "Thine end is at hand : prepare,"
As at Kadesh once, from amid the smoke,
To the prophet who led His People there ;
"I set thee up, I will cast thee down,
For that thou claimedst thyself the crown.

"Thine eyes have seen ; but thou shalt not stand
On the promised shore of a world set free ;
The People shall pass alone to the Land
Of Promise and Light and Liberty :
Of Peace enthroned in a Nation's trust,
When thou and thy throne alike are dust."

THE PRINCESS' PROGRESS

ACROSS the dusky land
The Gracious Goddess, Spring,
In vernal robes arrayed,
Last night her royal progress made,
Scattering with lavish hand
Her fragrant blossoming.
Along the wold,
In spendthrift glee,
She strewed her gold
And gilded all the lea.
The dandelions' yellow coin
Lie scattered in the tangled grass,
And buttercup and crocus join
To tell the way she chose to pass.
In lavish wealth the gleaming daffodil
Shines on the cloudy April hill,
And many a yellow marigold
Marks where her brazen chariot rolled;
The slender-necked narcissus bends

THE PRINCESS' PROGRESS

His dewy head, and leaning down,
Looks deep to find within a dew-drop's lens
A mirrowing pool where Love may drown.
No cranny deep nor nook
But felt her tender look;
No secret leafy place
But warmed before her face
And blossomed with her grace.
The woodland, sombre yesterday,
Hath in her presence donned a brave array,
And in a night grown gay.
Her purple cloak, all careless flung,
Upon the red-bud hung;
And on the forest trees,
Her richest laceries.
While sprinkled deep with dust of gold
The tender, flowery branches hold
Her verdant robe blown fold on fold.
Her queenly figure clad
In brodered raiment glad,
Complete and passing sweet,
Hath set the sylvan zephyrs mad.
About her breathed rare odors sweet,
Of roses blowing neath her feet:

THE PRINCESS' PROGRESS

About her breathed sweet odors rare,
Of violets shaken from her hair,
As though unseen of mortal eyes,
She 'd jarred the gates of Paradise.
Her crystal horn in passing by she wound,
And at the witching sound,
As by the enchanter's stroke,
The fields in music broke,
And every silent grove in melody awoke.
Responsive to her charmèd lyre
The dewy-throated choir
Carol in every brake and brier,
And flood with golden song
The verdant reaches ranged along—
Where drinking deep from fountains clear
Their inspiration,
They hymn their jubilation
That Spring again is here;
And all together sing
The Goddess of the Year,
The Spring: the gracious Spring.

YOUTH

I ONCE might hear the fairies sing
Upon the feathery grass a-swing,
Or in the orchard's blossoming:
Their melody so fine and clear,
One had to bend his ear to hear,
Or else the music well might pass
For zephyrs whispering in the grass.

I once might see the fairies dance
A-circle in their meadow-haunts,
Soft-tapered by the new-moon's glance:
Their airy feet in crystal shoon
Made twinklings neath the silver moon.
Such witchery, but that 't was seen,
Might well have been the dew-drops' sheen.

I 've wandered far yond summer seas,
Where Music dwells mid harmonies
That well the Seraphim might please;
But never more I catch, ah me!
The fairies' silvery melody—
Their crystal twinkling on the moonlit lea.

AMERICA : GREETING

I HAVE journeyed the spacious world over,
And here to thy sapphire wide gate,
America, I, thy True Lover
Return now, exalted, elate,
As an heir who returns to recover
His forefathers' lofty estate.

I 've seen visions of castle and palace
Up-soaring to sun-flooded skies,
Where men have drunk deep of Death's chalice,
In infinite soul-agonies—
Where Tyranny glutted her malice
And batted on Liberty's cries.

Where splendor of palace and tower
Cried up unto God with men's blood ;
Where th' emblems of Tyranny's Power

AMERICA: GREETING

Imperial and brazen have stood,
With faggot and sword to devour,
And the rack scowling hard by God's Rood.

And now at thy fair, open portal,
I stand as I stood in my Youth,
Amazed at the vision immortal
Of naked and unashamed Truth:
The Truth that the Fathers have taught all
Their children: their birth-right in sooth.

I greet thee: thy purple, large reaches,—
From the snow-mantled, spire-pointed pine,
To thy golden, long, low-lying beaches,
Awash with thy tropical brine,
And thine infinite bosom that teaches
How God hath made Freedom divine.

God dowered thee fair mid the Oceans:
He bulwarked thee strong with the seas,
That Man might preserve here the motions
He gave Freedom's bold processes:
That Man in his loftiest devotions
Might serve Freedom's altars in Peace.

AMERICA: GREETING

How crude then and rude then soever
Thy struggles to lift from the sod,
Thy Freedom is strong to dis sever
The Shackles, the Yoke, and the Rod;
Thy Freedom is Mighty forever,
For men who kneel only to God.

DAWN

WHO hath not heard in dusky summer dawns,
Ere winds Aurora's horn, the dreamy spell
Just rippled by some drowsy sentinel.
Who from his leafy outpost on the lawns
Chimes sleepily his call that all is well?
A moment—pipes another silvery note:
Aurora's crystal wheels flash up the sky;
The sentries cry the Dawn and joyously
Glad Welcome peals from every dewy throat,
And every leafy bough chimes melody.

So, in the gloom and silence of the night,
My heart in slumber steeped, unheeding lay,
Not recking how the hours might fleet away;
When on my Heavens dawned a radiant light,
And straight I wakened to a shining day.

THE POET ON AGRADINA

THE spacious cities hummed with toil:
The monarch reared his towers to the skies;
Men delved the fruitful soil
And studied to be wise;
Along the highway's rocky coil
The mailed legions rang;
Smiling unheeded 'mid the moil,
The Poet sang.

The glittering cities long are heaps:
The starry towers lie level with the plain;
The desert serpent sleeps
Where soared the marble fane;
The stealthy, bead-eyed lizard creeps
Where gleamed the tyrant's throne;
The grandeur dark oblivion steeps:
The song sings on.

THE SHEPHERD OF THE SEAS

FROM Raleigh's Devon hills the misty sea
Climbs ever westward till it meets the sky,
And silently the white-fleeced ships go by,
And mount and mount up the long azure lea,
Peaceful as sheep at night that placidly
Climb the tall downs to quiet pastures high,
Assured no foes dare lurk, no dangers lie
Where still abides their shepherd's memory.
Well did men name him "Shepherd of the Seas,"
Who knew so well his shepherd's watch to keep,
Driving the Spanish wolves with noble rage:
Forsaking Pomp and Power and Beds-of-ease
To herd his mighty flock through every Deep
And make of every sea their common pasturage.

SLEEP

IN MEMORIAM: A. B. P.

THOU best of all: God's choicest blessing, Sleep;
Better than Earth can offer—Wealth, Power,
Fame:

They change, decay; thou always art the same;
Through all the years thy freshness thou dost keep;
Over all lands thine even pinions sweep.

The sick, the worn, the blind, the lone, the lame,
Hearing thy tranquil footsteps, bless thy name;
Anguish is soothed, Sorrow forgets to weep.

Thou ope'st the captive's cell and bid'st him roam;
Thou giv'st the hunted refuge, free'st the slave,
Show'st the outcast pity, call'st the exile home;
Beggar and king thine equal blessings reap.

We for our loved ones Wealth, Joy, Honors crave;
But God, He giveth his beloved—Sleep.

TO A LADY AT A SPRING

LONG æons since, in leafy woodlands sweet,
Diana, weary with the eager chase,
Was wont to seek full oft some trysting-place
Loved of her rosy train; some cool retreat
Of crystal springs, deep-verdured from the heat
Of sultry noon, wherein each subtle grace
Of snowy form and radiant flower-face,
Narcissus-like, goddess and nymph might greet.
Diana long hath fled 'yond the main;
The founts which erst she loved are all bereft;
No more 'mid violet-banks her feet are set;
Silent her silvern bugle, fled her train;
One spot alone of all she loved is left:
This poplar-shaded spring is Goddess-haunted yet.

UNFORGOTTEN

OH! do not think that thee I can forget:
Though all the Centuries should o'er me roll—
Though Space should spread more far than Pole from
Pole,
Or star from furthest star betwixt us; yet,
I still would hold thee in my heart's core set:
More rare than rarest Queens whom Kings extol
When Death hath throned them high above regret.
Through endless Time when Memory the stone
Rolls back from silent years long sepulchred,
To call the Past forth from the sullen tomb,
Howe'er far 'yond her voice all else hath flown,
Shalt thou appear—her living summons heard—
Fresh as Eternal Spring in all thy radiant bloom.

THE OLD LION

"THE WHELPS OF THE LION ANSWER HIM"

THE Old Lion stood in his lonely lair:

The sound of the hunting had broken his rest:
He scowled to the Eastward: Tiger and Bear
Were harrying his Jungle. He turned to the west;
And sent through the murk and mist of the night
A thunder that rumbled and rolled down the trail;
And Tiger and Bear, the Quarry in sight,
Crouched low in the covert to cower and quail;
For deep through the midnight like surf on a shore,
Pealed Thunder in answer resounding with ire.
The Hunters turn'd stricken: they knew the dread
roar:

The Whelp of the Lion was joining his Sire.

THE DRAGON OF THE SEAS

APRIL, 1898

THEY say the Spanish ships are out
To seize the Spanish Main;
Reach down the volume, Boy, and read
The story o'er again:

How when the Spaniard had the might,
He drenched the Earth, like rain,
With Saxon blood and made it Death
To sail the Spanish Main.

With torch and steel; with stake and rack
He trampled out God's Truce
Until Queen Bess her leashes slip't
And let her sea-dogs loose.

God! how they sprang and how they tore!
The Gilberts, Hawkins, Drake!
Remember, Boy, they were your sires:
They made the Spaniard quake.

THE DRAGON OF THE SEAS

Dick Grenville with a single ship
Struck all the Spanish line:
One Devon knight to the Spanish Dons:
One ship to fifty and nine.

When Spain in San Ulloa's Bay
Her sacred treaty broke,
Stout Hawkins fought his way through fire
And gave her stroke for stroke.

A bitter malt Spain brewed that day,
She drained it to the lees:
The thunder of her guns awoke
The Dragon of The Seas.

From coast to coast he ravaged far,
A scourge with flaming breath:
Where'er the Spaniard sailed his ships,
Sailed Francis Drake and Death.

No coast was safe against his ire;
Secure no furthest shore;
The fairest day oft sank in fire
Before the Dragon's roar.

THE DRAGON OF THE SEAS

He made th' Atlantic surges red
Round every Spanish keel,
Piled Spanish decks with Spanish dead,
The noblest of Castile.

From Del Fuego's beetling coast
To sleety Hebrides
He hounded down the Spanish host
And swept the flaming seas.

He fought till on Spain's inmost lakes
'Mid Orange bowers set,
La Mancha's maidens feared to sail
Lest they the Dragon met.*

King Philip, of his ravin' reft,
Called for "the Pirate's" head;
The great Queen laughed his wrath to scorn
And knighted Drake instead.

And gave him ships and sent him forth
To sweep the Spanish Main,

*Note. It is related that King Philip one day invited a lady to sail with him on a lake, and she replied that she was afraid they might meet "the Dragon."

THE DRAGON OF THE SEAS

For England and for England's brood,
And sink the fleets of Spain.

And well he wrought his mighty work,
Till on that fatal day
He met his only conqueror,
In Nombre Dios Bay.

There in his shotted hammock swung
Amid the surges' sweep,
He waits the look-out's signal cry
Across the quiet deep,

And dreams of dark Ulloa's bar,
And Spanish treachery,
And how he tracked Magellan far
Across the unknown sea.

But if Spain fire a single shot
Upon the Spanish Main,
She 'll come to deem the Dragon dead
Has waked to life again.

THE BENT MONK

EVER along the way he goes,
With eyes cast down as in despair,
And shoulders stooped with weight of woes
And lips from which unceasing flows
An agonizèd prayer.

His form is bent; his step is slow;
His hands with fasting long are thin;
And wheresoe'er his footsteps go,
Men hear his muttered prayer and know
He weeps for deadly sin.

This monk was once the knightliest
Of knights who ever sat in hall:
With wondrous might and beauty blest;
And whoso met him lance-in-rest
Had need on Christ to call.

THE BENT MONK

Men say this monk with hair so hoar,
And eye where grief hath quenched the flame,
Once loved a maiden fair and pure,
And for she would not wed him swore
He 'd bring her down to Shame.

They say he wooed her long and well;
And splendid spoils both eve and morn
Of song and tourney won, they tell,
He gave her till at last she fell,
Then drave her forth with scorn.

The world was cold; her father's door
Was barred—they thus the tale repeat—
Her name was heard in jousts no more;
And so, one day the river bore
And laid her at his feet.

Her brow was calm, the sunny hair
Lay tangled in the snowy breast,
And from the face all trace of care
And sin was cleansed away, and there
Shone only utter rest.

THE BENT MONK

The old men say that when the wave
That burden brought, then backward fled,
He stooped, no sign nor groan he gave,
As mourners by an open grave;
But fell as one struck dead.

He seemed, when from that swoound he woke,
A man already touched by Death,
As when the stalwart forest oak,
Blasted beneath the lightning's stroke
Lives on, yet languisheth.

And ever since he tells his beads,
And sackcloth lieth next his skin,
And nightly his frail body bleeds
With knotted cord that intercedes
With Christ for deadly sin.

For his own soul he hath no care,
By penance purged as if by flame:
Men know that agonizèd prayer
He prays is for the maiden fair
Whom he brought down to Shame.

THE BENT MONK

And still along the way he goes,
With eyes cast down as in despair,
And shoulders stooped with weight of woes,
And lips from which forever flows
An agonizèd prayer.

THE MESSAGE

AN ancient tome came to my hands:
A tale of love in other lands:
Writ by a Master so divine,
The Love seems ever mine and thine.
The volume opened at the place
That sings of sweet Francesca's grace:
How reading of Fair Guinevere
And Launcelot that long gone year,
Her eyes into her lover's fell
And—there was nothing more to tell.
That day they op'ed that book no more:
Thenceforth they read a deeper lore.

Beneath the passage so divine,
Some woman's hand had traced a line,
And reverently upon the spot
Had laid a blue forget-me-not:
A message sent across the years,
Of Lovers' sighs and Lovers' tears:
A messenger left there to tell
They too had loved each other well.

THE MESSAGE

The centuries had glided by
Since Love had heaved that tender sigh;
The tiny spray that spoke her trust,
Had like herself long turned to dust.

I felt a sudden sorrow stir
My heart across the years for her,
Who, reading how Francesca loved,
Had found her heart so deeply moved:
Who, hearing poor Francesca's moan,
Had felt her sorrow as her own.
I hope where e'er her grave may be,
Forget-me-nots bloom constantly:
That somewhere in yon distant skies
He who is Love hath heard her sighs:
And her hath granted of His Grace,
Ever to see her Lover's face.

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

THEY bade me come to the House of Prayer,
They said I should find my Saviour there:
I was wicked enough, God wot, at best,
And weary enough to covet rest.

I paused at th' door with a timid knock:
The People within were a silken flock—
By their scowls of pride it was plain to see
Salvation was not for the likes of me.

The Bishop was there in his lace and lawn,
And the cassocked priest,—I saw him yawn,—
The rich and great and virtuous too,
Stood smug and contented each in his pew.

The music was grand,—the service fine,
The sermon was eloquent,—nigh divine.
The subject was, Pride and the Pharisee,
And the Publican, who was just like me.

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

I smote my breast in an empty pew,
But an usher came and looked me through
And bade me stand beside the door
In the space reserved for the mean and poor.

I left the church in my rags and shame:
In the dark without, One called my name.
They have turned me out as well," quoth He,
"Take thou my hand and come fare with me.

"We may find the light by a narrow gate,
The way is steep and rough and strait;
But none will look if your clothes be poor,
When you come at last to my Father's door."

I struggled on where'er He led:
The blood ran down from His hand so red!
The blood ran down from His forehead torn.

"'Tis naught," quoth He, "but the prick of a
thorn!"

"You bleed," I cried, for my heart 'gan quail.

"'Tis naught, 'tis naught but the print of a nail."

"You limp in pain and your feet are sore."

"Yea, yea," quoth He, "for the nails they were four."

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

"You are weary and faint and bent," I cried.
" 'Twas a load I bore up a mountain side."
"The way is steep, and I faint." But He:
"It was steeper far upon Calvary."

By this we had come to a narrow door,
I had spied afar. It was locked before;
But now in the presence of my Guide,
The fast-closed postern opened wide.

And forth there streamed a radiance
More bright than is the noon-sun's glance;
And harps and voices greeted Him—
The music of the Seraphim.

I knew His face where the light did fall:
I had spat in it, in Herod's Hall,
I knew those nail-prints now, ah, me!—
I had helped to nail Him to a tree.

I fainting fell before His face,
Imploring pardon of His grace.
He stooped and silencing my moan,
He bore me near to His Father's throne.

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

He wrapt me close and hid my shame,
And touched my heart with a cleansing flame.
“Rest here,” said He, “while I go and try
To widen a little a Needle’s Eye.”

THE CLOSED DOOR

LORD, is it Thou who knockest at my door?
I made it fast and 't will not open more;
Barred it so tight I scarce can hear Thy knock,
And am too feeble now to turn the lock,
Clogged with my folly and my grievous sin:
Put forth Thy might, O Lord, and burst it in.

CONVENTION

AT the Judgment-bar stood spirits three:
A thief, a fool and a man of degree,
To whom spake the Judge in his Majesty:

To the shivering thief: "Thy sins are forgiven,
For that to repent thou hast sometime striven;
There be other penitent thieves in Heaven."

To the fool: "Poor fool, thou art free from sin;
To My light thou, too, mayest enter in,
Where Life and Thought shall for thee begin."

To the mirror of others, smug and neat,
With the thoughts and sayings of others replete,
This Judgment rolled from the Judgment-seat:

"Remain thou thyself, a worm to crawl.
Thou, doubly damned, canst not lower fall
Than ne'er to have thought for thyself at all."

THE MAGDALEN

SHE flaunted recklessly along,
With hollow laugh and mocking song;

In tawdry garb and painted mirth,
The sorrowfulest thing on earth.

Time runs apace: the fleeting years
Left but her misery and her tears.

The very brothel-door was barred
Against a wretch so crook'd and marred.

She knocked at every gate in vain,
The cast-out harlot black with stain—

At all save one,—when this she tried,—
'T was His, the High Priest crucified.

He heard her tears, flung wide His door
And said, "Come in, and sin no more."

THE REQUIREMENT

TO the Steward of his vineyard spake the Lord,
When he handed him over His Keys and Sword:
“See that you harken unto my word:

“There be three chief things that I love,” quoth He,
“That bear a sweet savor up to me:
They be Justice, Mercy and Purity.”

Justice was sold at a thief's behest;
Purity went for a harlot's jest,
And Mercy was slain with a sword in her breast.

THE LISTENER

A SPARROW sang on a weed,
Sprung from an upturned sod,
And no one gave him heed
Or heard the song, save God.

CONTRADICTION

A BISHOP preached Sunday on Dives forsaken :
How he was cast out and Lazarus taken ;
The very next day he rejoiced he was able
To dine that evening at Dives' table.
While wretched Lazarus, sick and poor,
Was called an impostor and turned from the door.

THE QUESTION

WHY may I not step from this empty room,
Where heavy round me hangs the curtained
gloom,

And passing through a little darkness there,
Even as one climbs to bed an unlit stair,
Find that I know is but one step above,
And that I hunger for: my Life: my Love?

'T is but a curtain doth our souls divide,
A veil my eager hand might tear aside—
One step to take, one thrill, one throb, one bound,
And I have gained my Heaven, the Lost have found—
Have solved the riddle rare, the secret dread:
The vast, unfathomable secret of the Dead.

It seems but now that as I yearning stand,
I might put forth my hand and touch her hand;
That I might lift my longing eyes and trace
But for the darkness there the gracious face;
That could I hush the grosser sounds, my ear
The charmèd music of her voice might hear.

THE QUESTION

She may not come to me, Alas! I know,
Else had she surely come, long, long ago.
The Conqueror Death, who save One conquers all,
Had never power to hold that soul in thrall;
No narrowest prison-house; no piled up stone
Had held her heart a captive from my own.

No, 't is not these: Hell's might nor Heaven's
 charms,
Had never power to hold her from my arms;—
'T is that by some inscrutable, fixed Law,
Vaster than mortal vision ever saw,
Whose sweep is worlds; whose track Eternity,
Somewhere her soul angelic waits for me:—

Waits patiently His Wisdom, whose decree
Is Wisdom's self veiled in Infinity:
Who gives us Life divine with mortal breath,
Yet in its pathway, lo! hath planted Death;
Who grants us Love our dull souls to uplift
Nearer to Him; yet tears away His Gift;

Crowns us with Reason in His image made,
Yet blinds our eyes with never lifting shade.

THE QUESTION

Who may the mystery solve? 'T is His decree!
Can Mortal understand Infinity?
Prostrate thyself before His feet, dull clod,
Who saith, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Ah! did we surely know the joys that wait
Beyond the portal of the silent gate,
Who would a moment longer here abide,
The spectre, Sorrow, stalking at his side?
Who would not daring take the leap and be
Unbound, unfettered clean, a slave set free!

OUR DEAD

WE bury our dead,
We lay them to sleep
With the earth for their bed,
With stones at their head:
We leave them and weep
When we bury our dead.

We bury our dead,
We lay them to sleep,—
On our Mother's calm breast
We leave them to rest—
To rest while we weep.

We bury our dead,
We lay them to sleep—
They reckon not our tears,
Though the sad years creep—
Through our tears, through the years
They tranquilly sleep.

OUR DEAD

We bury our dead,
We lay them to sleep;
We bury the bloom
Of our life,—all our bloom
In the coffin we fold:
We enfold in the tomb:
We reënter the room
We left young,—we are old.

We bury our dead,
We lay them to sleep;
The cold Time-tides flow
With winter and spring,
With birds on the wing,
With roses and snow,
With friends who beguile
Our sorrow with pity—
With pity awhile.
Then weary and smile,
Then chide us, say, “Lo!
How the sun shines,—’t is May.”
But we know ’t is not so—
That the sun died that day
When we laid them away,

OUR DEAD

With the earth for a bed—
When we buried our dead.

We bury our dead,
We lay them to sleep;
We turn back to the world;
We are caught,—we are whirled
In the rush of the current—
The rush and the sweep
Of the tide, without rest.
But they sleep—they the blest—
The Blessed dead sleep:
They tranquilly rest
On our Mother's calm breast.

MY MOTHER

I KNEW her in her prime,
Before the seal of Time
Was graven on her brow,
As Age hath graved it now:
When radiant Youth was just subdued
To yield to gracious womanhood.
And as an inland lake
Lies tranquil mid the hills,
Unruffled by the storms that break
Beyond, and mirrors Heaven;
So, to her spirit, freed from ills,
A blessed calm was given.
Encircled by War's strife
Peace ruled her life.
Christ's teachings were her constant guide,
And naught beside,
Christ's Death and Passion were her plea—

MY MOTHER

None needed she;
For that amid earth's fiercest strife
Her life was patterned on His life.
Now when her eyes grow dim
She lives so close to Him,
The radiance of His smile
Envelops her the while.
As when the Prophet's figure shone
With light reflected from the Throne,
So, ever in her face
Shines Heaven's divinest grace.
Her soul is fresh and mild
As is a little child.
And as the fleshly tenement
With age grows worn and bent,
Her Spirit's unabated youth
Is aye to me
The mind-compelling truth
Of Immortality.
Her voice is, as it were,
A silver dulcimer,
Tuned like the seraph's lays
Eternally to praise.
The blessings of Christ's chosen friends

MY MOTHER

Are doubly hers, whose mind,
To charity inclined,
No selfish ends
Have ever for an instant moved :
Who served like Martha
And like Mary loved.

HER INFLUENCE

THE tender Earth that smiles when kissed by
Spring;

The flowers; the budding woods; the birds that sing
The Summer's song her spirit to me bring.

The meadows cool that breathe their fragrant myrrh;
Deep, placid pools that little breezes blur;
Soft-tinkling springs speak to my heart of her.

Heaven's purple towers upon the horizon's rim;
The dove that mourns upon his lonely limb,
Fill my soul's cup with memories to its brim.

In evening's calm when in the quiet skies,
The lustrous, silent, tender stars uprise,
I feel the holy influence of her eyes.

That deeper hour when Night with Dawn is blent,
And Silence stirs, its languors well-nigh spent,
I hear her gently sigh with sweet content.

HER INFLUENCE

I hear young children laughing in the street:
Catch rays of sunshine from them as we meet,
And smile content to know what makes them sweet.

Yea, everywhere, in every righteous strife,
I find her spirit's fragrant influence rife,
Like Mary's precious spikenard sweetening Life.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

HE challenged all that came within his ken,
And Error held with steadfast mind aloof.
E'en Truth itself he put upon the proof:
Holding that Light was God's first gift to men.

THE STRANGER

STRAYING one day amid the leafy bowers,
A Presence passed, masked in a sunny ray,
Tossing behind him carelessly the hours,
As one shakes blossoms from a ravished spray,—
 Strewing them far and wide,
 Nor glanced to either side.

A-sudden as he strolled he chanced upon
A flower which full within his pathway blew,
White as a lily, modest as a nun,
Sweeter than Lilith's rose in Eden grew—
 Her beauty he espied,
 Approached and softly sighed.

His breath the blossom stirred and all the air
Grew fragrant with a subtle, rich perfume;
The spicèd alleys glowed, the while a rare
And crystal radiance did illumine
 All the adjacent space
 As 't were an angel's face.

THE STRANGER

Kneeling, he gently laid his glowing lips,
Like softest music on her lips, when came
A thrill that trembled to her petal-tips,
And on the instant, with a sudden flame,
 Leaped forth the shining sun,
 And Earth and Heaven were one.

“Who art thou?” queried she, “Tell me thy name,
To whom Godlike this Godlike power is given,
That thus for me, without or fear or shame,
But by thy lips’ soft touch createst Heaven?”
 Whilst to his heart she clove,
 He whispered, “I am Love.”

LOVE

(AFTER ANACREON)

ASTRAY within a garden bright
I found a tiny wingèd sprite:

He scarce was bigger than a sparrow
And bore a little bow and arrow.

I lifted him up in my arm,
Without a thought of guile or harm;

But merely as it were in play,
With threats to carry him away.

The sport he took in such ill part,
He stuck an arrow in my heart.

And ever since, I have such pain,—
I cannot draw it out again.

And yet, the strangest part is this:
I love the pain as though 't were bliss.

AN OLD REFRAIN

IT seems to me as I think of her,
That my youth has come again:
I hear the breath of summer stir
The leaves in the old refrain:

“Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady be?
I will seek my Love, with the wings of a dove,
And pray her to love but me.”

The flower-kissed meadows all once more
Are green with grass and plume;
The apple-trees again are hoar
With fragrant snow of bloom.

Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

The meadow-brook slips tinkling by
With silvery, rippling flow,
And blue-birds sing on fences nigh,
To dandelions below.

AN OLD REFRAIN

Oh! my Lady-love, Oh, my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

I hear again the drowsy croon
Of honey-laden bees,
And catch the poppy-mellowed rune
They hum to locust trees.
Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady-love be? etc.

Far off the home-returning cows
Low that the Eve is late,
And call their calves neath apple-boughs
To meet them at the gate.
Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

Once more the Knights and ladies pass
In visions Fancy-wove:
I lie full length in summer grass,
To choose my own True-Love.
Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

AN OLD REFRAIN

I know not how,—I know not where,—

I dream a fairy-spell:

I know she is surpassing fair,—

I know I love her well.

Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!

Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

I know she is as pure as snow:—

As true as God's own Truth:—

I know,—I know I love her so,

She must love me, in sooth!

Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!

Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

I know the stars dim to her eyes;

The flowers blow in her face:

I know the angels in the skies

Have given her of their grace.

Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!

Oh! where can my Lady be? etc.

And none but I her heart can move,

Though seraphs may have striven;

And when I find my own True-love,

I know I shall find Heaven.

AN OLD REFRAIN

Oh! my Lady-love! Oh! my Lady-love!
Oh! where can my Lady be!
I will seek my Love with the wings of a dove
And pray her to love but me.

TO CLAUDIA

IT is not, Claudia, that thine eyes
Are sweeter far to me,
Than is the light of Summer skies
To captives just set free.

It is not that the setting sun
Is tangled in thy hair,
And recks not of the course to run,
In such a silken snare.

Nor for the music of thy words,
Fair Claudia, love I thee,
Though sweeter than the songs of birds
That melody to me.

It is not that rich roses rare
Within thy garden grow,
Nor that the fairest lilies are
Less snowy than thy brow.

TO CLAUDIA

Nay, Claudia, 't is that every grace
In thy dear self I find;
That Heaven itself is in thy face,
And also in thy mind.

THE APPLE-TREES AT EVEN

AH! long ago it seems to me,
Those sweet old days of summer,
When I was young and fair was she,
And sorrow only rumor.

And all the world was less than naught
To me who had her favor;
For Time and Care had not then taught
How Life of Death hath savor.

And all the day the roving bees
Clung to the swinging clover,
And robins in the apple-trees
Answered the faint-voiced plover.

And all the sounds were low and sweet;
The zephyrs left off roaming
In curving gambols o'er the wheat,
To kiss her in the gloaming.

THE APPLE-TREES AT EVEN

The apple-blossoms kissed her hair,
The daisies prayed her wreathes them;
Ah, me! the blossoms still are there,
But she lies deep beneath them.

I now have turned my thoughts to God,
Earth from my heart I sever;
With fast and prayer I onward plod—
With prayer and fast forever.

Yet, when the white-robed priest speaks low
And bids me think of Heaven,
I always hear the breezes blow
The apple-trees at even.

MY TRUE-LOVE'S WEALTH

MY True-love hath no wealth they say;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
For she hath wealth of golden hair,
Shot through with shafts from Delos' bow,
That shines about her shoulders rare,
Like sunlight on new driven snow.

My True-love hath no wealth they say;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
For she hath eyes so soft and bright,
So deep the light that in them lies,
That stars in heaven would lose their light
Ashine beside my True-love's eyes.

My True-love hath no wealth they say;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
For oh! she hath such dainty hands,
So snowy white, so fine and small,
That had I wealth of Ophir's lands,
For one of them I 'd give it all.

MY TRUE-LOVE'S WEALTH

My True-love hath no wealth they say ;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
For oh ! she hath a face so fair,
Such winsome light about it plays,
For worldly wealth I nothing care,
So I can look upon her face.

My True-love hath no wealth they say ;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
For endless wealth of mind hath she,
Her heart so stored with precious lore—
Her riches they as countless be
As shells upon the ocean's shore.

My True-love hath no wealth they say ;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
The wild-brier bough hath less of grace
And on wild violets when she treads
They turn to look into her face
And scarcely bow their azure heads.

My True-love hath no wealth they say ;
But when they do, I tell them nay,—
For oh ! she hath herself, in fee,
And this is more than worlds to me.

A VALENTINE

MY patron saint, St. Valentine,
Why dost thou leave me to repine,
Still supplicating at her shrine?

But bid her eyes to me incline,
I 'll ask no other sun to shine,
More rich than is Golconda's mine.

Range all that Woman, Song, or Wine
Can give; Wealth, Power, and Fame combine;
For her I 'd gladly all resign.

Take all the pearls are in the brine,
Sift heaven for stars, earth's flowers entwine,
But be her heart my Valentine.

A PORTRAIT

A MOUTH red-ripened like a warm, sweet rose,
Wherein are gleaming pearls all pure and bright
As dewdrops nestled where the zephyr blows
With pinion soft across the humid night;
A cheek not ruddy, but soft-tinged and fair,
Where whiles the rich patrician blood is seen,
As though it knew itself a thing too rare
For common gaze, yet did its high demean;
A brow serene and pure as her white soul,
By which the sifted snow would blackened seem
That sleeps untrodden where the Northern pole
Rests calm, unscanned save by the Moon's chaste beam;
Eyes gray as Summer twilight skies are gray,
And deep with light as deep, still waters are,—
Tender as evening's smile when kissing day,
Yet bright and true as is her lustrous star.
These all unite and with accordant grace
Make heaven mirrored ever in her face.

FÉLICE

YOU are very fair, Félice, wondrous fair,
And the light deep in your eyes
Is more soft than summer skies,
And rare roses in your cheek
Play with lilies hide-and-seek,—
Play as Pleasure plays with Care.

And your throat is white, Félice, wondrous white,
White as sifted snow, I wis,
Ere the sun hath stol'n a kiss,
High up starry mountain-heights,
Or as in rich moonful nights
Parian baths in Cynthia's light.

And, Félice, your rippling waves of soft hair,
In their mystic depths aye hold
Shade and shimmer of red gold,
Like a halo round your face,
Lending you another grace
From the sunbeams shining there.

FÉLICE

And your voice is sweet, Félice, wondrous sweet,
As the murmur of the sea,
After long captivity,
To a sailor far inland,—
Or as summer flowers fanned
By soft zephyrs blown o'er wheat.

But so stony, fair Félice, is your heart,
That I wonder oft, I own,
If you 're not mere carven stone—
While my soul your charms enthrall—
Just some chiseled Goddess tall:
Merely Beauty, Stone, and Art.

LOVE SONG

LOVE 's for Youth, and not for Age,
E'en though Age should wear a crown;
For the Poet, not the Sage;
Not the Monarch, but the Clown.

Love 's for Peace, and not for War,
E'en though War bring all renown;
For the Violet, not the Star;
For the Meadow, not the Town.

Love 's for lads and Love 's for maids,
Courts a smile and flees a frown;
Love 's for Love, and saucy jades
Love Love most when Love has flown.

Love a cruel tyrant is:
Slays his victims with a glance,
Straight recovers with a kiss,
But to slay again, perchance.

LOVE SONG

Wouldst thou know where Love doth bide?

Whence his sharpest arrows fly?

In a dimple Love may hide,

Or the ambush of an eye.

Wert thou clad in triple mail,

In some desert far apart,

Not a whit would this avail:

Love would find and pierce thy heart.

THE HARBOUR-LIGHT

OH, the Harbour-light and the Harbour-light!
And how shall we come to the Harbour-light?
'Tis black to-night and the foam is white,
And would we might win to the Harbour-light!

Oh, the Harbour-bar and the Harbour-bar!
And how shall we pass o'er the Harbour-bar?
The sea is tost and the ship is lost,
And deep is the sleep 'neath the Harbour-bar.

FADED SPRAY OF MIGNONETTE

FADED spray of mignonette,
Can you ever more forget
How you lay that summer night,
In the new moon's silvery light,
Dreaming sweet in tranquil rest
On my true-love's snowy breast?

Since her rosy finger-tips
Bore you to her fragrant lips,
Blessed you with a shadowy kiss,
Nestled you again in bliss,
(Envied of the Gods above)
All is faded save my love.

LOST ROSES

I STOOD beside the laughing, shining river,
And shook the roses down upon its breast,—
I watched them whirl away with gleam and quiver,
As 't were a merry jest.

I stood beside the silent, sombre river,
As creepingly the tide came from the sea,
I watched for my fair roses, but ah! never
Did they come back to me.

DE NAME OF OLE VIRGINIA

SONG

DE old place on de Ches'peake Bay
Is in my heart to-night—
I hopes to git back d'yar some day,
An' hongers for de sight.

Dee come an' tole me I was free,
An' all my work was done;
I left dem whar was good to me,
An' now I 'se all alone.

De name of ole Virginia
Is sweet as rain in drouf—
Oh! Master, say, has you been dy'ar?
Hit 's way down in de Souf.

De grass dat grows 'pon top de hill
De ones I love does hide,
I pray de Lord to spyah me still
To sleep dyar by dee side.

DE NAME OF OLE VIRGINIA

De ole plantation 's sole an' all,
But sometime dee will come,
An' I will hear Brer Gabrull call,
To fetch de ole man home.

De name ob ole Virginia
Is sweet as rain in drouf—
Oh! Master, say, has you been dy'ar?
Hit 's way down in de Souf.

THE DANCER

FROM ONE WHO KNOWS ONE OF THE MUSES

YOU say the gods and muses all
From earth now banished be?
Will you believe that yester-eve
I saw Terpsichore?

Her robe of snow and gossamer
Enclad a form most neat;
Such sandals green were never seen
As shod her twinkling feet.

Her every step was melody,
Her every motion grace,
That one might prize a thousand eyes
To note both form and face.

The motes that dance in sunny beams
Tripped never in such wise;
This lovely sprite danced in the light
That beamed from her own eyes.

THE DANCER

A man's head once was danced away—

You know how it befell?

My dainty fay danced yesterday

Men's hearts away as well.

What 's that? 'Twas but a graceful girl

That took the hearts for pelf?

Nay, I was there, and 't was, I swear,

Terpsichore herself.

THE APRIL-FACE

AN OLD IDYL OF A RICHMOND STREET-CAR

ALL up the street at a stately pace
The maiden passed with her April-face,
And the roses I 'd paid for, on her breast
Were white as the eggs in a partridge-nest,
While behind her—driver upon his stool—
Tinkled the bell of the street-car mule.

“Going to walk up the street?” I said;
She graciously bowed her beautiful head.
“Then I 'll walk, too; 't is a lovely day.”—
Thus I opened the ball in my usual way.
“Do you see the car anywhere?” inquired
The April-face, “I 'm a trifle tired.”

I urged a walk; 'twas a useless suit!
She wildly waved her parachute;
The stub-tailed mule stopped quick enow;
I handed her in with a stately bow;
And the bell rang out with a jangled quirk,
As the stub-tailed mule went off with a jerk.

THE APRIL-FACE

Three men as she entered solemnly rose,
And quietly trampled their neighbors' toes;
A dudish masher left his place,
And edged near the girl with the April-face,
Who sat on the side you 'd call "the lee,"
(With the same sweet smile she 'd sat on me).

The day it was lovely; mild the air;
The sky, like the maiden's face, was fair;
The car was full, and a trifle stale
(Attached to the mule with the stubbly tail);
Yet the maiden preferred the seat she hired,
To the stroll with me; for I made her tired.

And now when the maiden walks the street
With another's flowers, and smile so sweet,
I wave to the driver upon his stool,
And stop the stub-tailed street-car mule,
While I purchase a seat with half my pelf;
For it makes me a trifle tired myself.

COME BACK TO US, DAVIE

SO, Davie, you 're gaeing to tak yo' a wife
To halve a' yo' sorrows, an' sweeten yo' life;
An' Davie, my laddie, I wish you enow
Of joy and content on your shiny auld pow.

She 's feat and she 's brightsome, I ken, as the day
When sinshine is whispering its luv to the May;
Her cheeks are like blossoms, her mouth is a rose,
And her teeth are the pearlies its petals enclose.

Of her voice, her ain music, I dinna' say mair,
Than that 'tis a strain might a bogle ensnare,
And her een they are stars beaming forth a bright
flame
To cheer a puir wanderer and lead him safe hame.

Yes, Davie, ye villain, ye 're sleekit and slee,
Ye 've lift the door sneck and looped in afore me;
Ye 've steek it ahint ye and lea'ed me alain,
Like a dowie auld cat blinkin' by the hearth-stane.

COME BACK TO US, DAVIE

Yet Davie, belyve, should you mind in your joy
The puir lonely earlies you lo'ed as a boy,
The memories of canty auld days we have spent
Will come like the harp-tones o'er still waters sent.

Then come to me, Davie, auld days we 'll renew;
We 'll heap the bit-ingle and bouse the auld brew;
We 'll smoke the auld pipe, till we freshen your life,
And send you back young as a boy to your wife.

THE WITCH

CELIA, before her mirror bends,
Inquiring how to please her friends.

The mystery is solved apace:
The mirror but reflects her grace.

Her mirror Celia now defies,
She sees herself in all men's eyes.

Celia 's a witch, and hath such arts,
Her image is in all men's hearts.

HUMANITY

A LOVER left his new-made bride
And shot a dove with her mate at her side.

ASPIRATION

I HAVE stood and watched the Eagle soar into the
Sun,
And envied him his swift light-cleaving pinion;
And, though I may not soar, at least I may
Lift up my feet above the encumbering clay.

REALITY

THERE be three things real in all the earth:
Mother-love, Death, and a Little Child's mirth.

LITTLE DOLLY DIMPLE

LITTLE Dolly Dimple,
In her green wimple,
Knows all the philosophers know:
That fire is hot
And ice is not,
And that sun will melt the snow.
She has heard that the moon is made of green cheese;
But she 's not quite certain of this.
She knows if you tickle your nose you will sneeze,
And a hurt is made well by a kiss.
I wish I were wise as Dolly is wise,
For mysteries lie in her deep, clear eyes.

A VALENTINE

TO M. F. AND F. F.

*“THE Fourteenth Day of February fine:
I choose you for my Valentine.”*

Thus ran the first of the sweet old rhymes
On the Lovers'-Day in the old, sweet times:
And so, I follow closely along
To tell my love in the words of the song.

*“Roses are red; violets are blue;
Pinks are sweet, and so are you.”*

Roses are red in my sweetheart's cheeks,
Deepening tints whenever one speaks;
Violets are blue in the eyes of one;
In the eyes of the other smileth the sun;
But never were roses half so rare
And never were pinks a tithing as fair
And never have they in their garden-bed
A hundredth part of the fragrance shed,

A VALENTINE

As my two flowers in their sweet home-frame,
Both flowers by nature and one by name.
So as sure as the bloom grows on the vine
I 'll choose them for my valentine:
My sweet-heart one and my sweet-heart two,
Both little sweet-hearts sweet and true—
To love and to cherish forever mine:
To cherish and love as my valentine.



DIALECT POEMS

FROM "BEFO' DE WAR"



UNCLE GABE'S WHITE FOLKS

SARVENT, Marster! Yes, suh, dat 's me—
'Ole Unc' Gabe' 's my name;

I thankee, Marster; I 'm 'bout, yo' see.

"An' de ole 'ooman?" She 's much de same:

Po'ly an' c'plainin', thank de Lord!

But de Marster's gwine ter come back from 'broad.

"Fine ole place?" Yes, suh, 't is so;

An' mighty fine people my white folks war—
But you ought ter 'a' seen it years ago,

When de Marster an' de Mistis lived up dyah;
When de niggers 'd stan' all roun' de do',
Like grains o' corn on de cornhouse flo'.

"Live' mons'ous high?" Yes, Marster, yes;

D' cut 'n' onroyal 'n' gordly dash;
Eat an' drink till you could n' res'.

My folks war n' none o' yo' po'-white-trash;

UNCLE GABE'S WHITE FOLKS

Nor, suh, dey was of high degree—
Dis heah nigger am quality!

“Tell you 'bout 'em?” You mus' 'a' hearn
'Bout my ole white folks, sho'!
I tell you, suh, dey was gre't an' stern;
D' didn' have nuttin' at all to learn;
D' knowed all dar was to know;
Gol' over dey head an' onder dey feet;
An' silber! dey sowed 't like folks sows wheat.

“Use' ter be rich?” Dat warn' de wud!
D' jes' wallowed an' roll' in wealf.
Why, none o' my white folks ever stir'd
Ter lif' a han' for d' self;
De niggers use ter be stan'in' roun'
Jes' d' same ez leaves when dey fus' fall down;
De stable-stalls up heah at home
Looked like teef in a fine-toof comb;
De cattle was p'digious—I mus' tell de fac'!
An' de hogs mecked de hill-sides look lite black;
An' de flocks o' sheep was so gre't an' white
Dey 'peared like clouds on a moonshine night.
An' when my ole Mistis use' ter walk—

UNCLE GABE'S WHITE FOLKS

Jes' ter her kerridge (dat was fur
Ez ever she walked)—I tell you, sir,
You could almos' heah her silk dress talk;
Hit use' ter soun' like de mornin' breeze,
When it wakes an' rustles de Gre't House trees.
An' de Marster's face!—de Marster's face,
Whenever de Marster got right pleased—
Well, I 'clar' ter Gord! 't would shine wid grace
De same ez his countenance had been greased.
Dat cellar, too, had de bes' o' wine,
An' brandy, an' sperrits dat yo' could fine;
An' ev'ything in dyah was stored,
'Skusin' de Glory of de Lord!

“Warn' dyah a son?” Yes, suh, you knows
He 's de young Marster now;
But we heah dat dey tooken he very clo'es
Ter pay what ole Marster owe;
He 's done been gone ten year, I s'pose.
But he 's comin' back some day, of co'se;
An my ole 'ooman is aluz 'pyard,
An' meekin' de Blue-Room baid;
An' ev'ry day dem sheets is ayard,
An' will be tell *she* 's daid;

UNCLE GABE'S WHITE FOLKS

An' dem styars she 'll scour,
An' dat room she 'll ten',
Ev'y blessed day dat de Lord do sen'!

What say, Marster? Yo' say, you knows—?

He 's young an' slender-like an' fyah;
Better-lookin' 'n you, of co'se!

Hi! you 's he? 'Fo' Gord! 't is him!

'T is de very voice an' eyes an' hyah,

An' mouf an' smile, on'y yo' ain' so slim—

I wonder whah—whah is de ole 'ooman?

Now let my soul

Depart in peace

For I behol'

Dy glory, Lord!—I knowed you, chile—

I knowed you soon 's I see 'd your face!

Whar has you been dis blessed while?

Yo' 's "done come back an' buy de place?

Oh, bless de Lord for all his grace!

De ravins shell hunger, an' shell not lack

De Marster, de young Marster is done come back!

LITTLE JACK¹

YES, suh. 'T was jes' 'bout sundown
Dad went—two months ago;
I always used ter run down
Dat time, bec'us', you know,
I wudden like ter had him die,
An' no one nigh.

You see, we cudden git him
Ter come 'way off dat lan'—
'E said New House did n' fit him,
No mo' 'n new shoes did; an'
Gord mout miss him at Jedgment day,
Ef he moved 'way.

“How ole?” Ef we all wondered
How ole he was, he 'd frown
An' say he was “a hundred an—
Ole Miss done sot it down,
An' she could tell—'t was fo' or five—
Ef she was live.”

¹ In memory of John Dabney, of Richmond, Virginia:
a man faithful to all trusts.

LITTLE JACK

Well, when, as I was sayin',
Dat night I come on down,
I see he bench was layin'
Flat-sided on de groun';
An' I kinder hurried to'ds de do'—
Quick-like, you know.

Inside I see him layin'
Back, quiet, on de bed;
An' I heahed him kep on sayin':
"Dat 's what ole Marster said;
An' Marster warn' gwine tell me lie,
He 'll come by-m'-by."

I axed how he was gettin'.
"Nigh ter de furrow's een',"
He said; "dis ebenin', settin'
Outside de do', I seen
De thirteen curlews come in line,
An' knowed de sign.

"You know, ole Marster tole me
He 'd come for me 'fo' long;
'Fo' you was born, he sole me—
But den he pined so strong

LITTLE JACK

He come right arter Little Jack,
An' buyed him back.

"I went back ter de kerrige
An' tuk dem reins ag'in.
I druv him ter his marriage;
An', nigger, 't was a sin
Ter see de high an' mighty way
I looked dat day!

"Dat coat had nary button
'Skusin' it was ob gole;
My hat—but dat warn't nuttin'!
'T was noble ter behole
De way dem hosses pawed de yar,
Wid me up dyar.

"Now all 's w'ared out befo' me!—
Marster, an' coat, an' all;
Me only lef'—you know me!—
Cheat wheat 's de lars' ter fall:
De rank grain ben's wid its own weight,
De light stan's straight.

"But heah! Ole Marster 's waitin'—
So I mus' tell you: raise

LITTLE JACK

De jice dyar; 'neaf de platin'—
De sweat o' many days
Is in dat stockin'—toil an' pain
In sun an' rain.

"I worked ter save dem figgers
Ter buy *you*; but de Lord
He sot free all de niggers,
Same as white-folks, 'fo' Gord!
Free as de crows! Free as de stars!
Free as ole hyars!

"Now, chile, you teek dat money,
Git on young Marster's track,
An' pay it ter him, honey;
An' tell him Little Jack
Worked forty year, dis Chris'mus come,
Ter save dat sum;

"An' dat 't was for ole Marster,
To buy your time f'om him;
But dat de war come farster,
An' squandered stock an' lim'—
Say you kin work an' don't need none,
An' he earn't, son.

LITTLE JACK

“He ain’ been use ter diggin’
His livin’ out de dirt;
He carn’t drink out a piggin,
Like you; an’ it ’ud hurt
Ole Marster’s pride, an’ make him sw’ar,
In glory dyar!”

Den all his strength seemed fallin’;
He shet his eyes awhile,
An’ den said: “Heish! he ’s callin’!
Dyar he! Now watch him smile!
Yes, suh— You niggers jes’ stan’ back!
Marster, here ’s Jack!”

ASHCAKE

WELL, yes, suh, dat am a comical name
It are so, an' for a fac'—
But I knowed one, down in Ferginyer,
Could 'a' toted dat on its back.

“What was it?” I 'm gwine to tell you—
'T was mons'us long ago:
'T was, “Ashcake,” suh; an' all on us
Use' ter call 'im jes', “Ashcake,” so.

You see, suh, my ole Marster, he
Was a pow'ful wealfy man,
Wid mo' plantations dan hyahs on you haid—
Gre't acres o' low-groun' lan':

Jeems River bottoms, dat used ter stall
A fo'-hoss plough, no time;
An' he 'd knock' you down ef you jes' had dyared
Ter study 'bout guano 'n' lime.

ASHCAKE

De corn used ter stan' in de row dat thick
You jes' could follow de balk;
An' rank! well I 'clar' ter de king, Ise seed
Five 'coons up a single stalk!

He owned mo' niggers 'n arr' a man
About dyar, black an' bright;
He owned so many, b'fo' de Lord,
He did n' know all by sight!

Well, suh, one evelin', long to'ds dusk,
I seen de Marster stan'
An' watch a yaller boy pass de gate
Wid a ashcake in his han'.

He never had no mammy at all—
Leastways, she was dead by dat—
An' de cook an' de hands about on de place
Used ter see dat de boy kep' fat.

Well, he trotted along down de parf dat night,
An' de Marster he seen him go,
An' hollered, "Say, boy—say, what 's yer name?"
"A—ashcake, suh," says Joe.

ASHCAKE

It 'peared ter tickle de Marster much,
An' he called him up to de do'.
"Well, dat is a curisome name," says he;
"But I guess it suits you, sho'."

"Whose son are you?" de Marster axed.
"Young Jane's," says Joe; "she 's daid."
A sperrit cudden 'a' growed mo' pale,
An', "By Gord!" I heerd him said.

He tuk de child 'long in de house,
Jes' 'count o' dat ar whim;
An', dat-time-out, you nuver see
Sich sto' as he sot by him.

An' Ashcake swung his cradle, too,
As clean as ever you see;
An' stuck as close ter ole Marster's heel
As de shader sticks to de tree.

'Twel one dark night, when de river was out,
De Marster an' Ashcake Joe
Was comin' home an' de skiff upshot,
An' bofe wo 'd 'a' drowned, sho',

ASHCAKE

Excusin' dat Ashcake cotch'd ole Marst'r
An' gin him holt o' de boat,
An' saved him so; but 't was mo'n a week
B'fo' *his* body comed afloat.

An' de Marster buried dat nigger, suh,
In de white-folks' graveyard, sho!
An' he writ 'pon a white-folks' tombstone,
"Ashcake"—jes' "Ashcake" so.

An' de Marster he grieved so 'bouten dat thing,
It warn' long, suh, befo' he died;
An' he 's sleep, 'way down in Ferginyer,
Not fur from young Ashcake's side.

ZEKYL'S INFIDELITY

MISTIS, I r'al'y wish you 'd hole
A little conversation

Wid my old Zekyl 'bout his soul.

Dat nigger's sitiuation

Is mons'us serious, 'deed 'n' 't is,

'Skusin' he change dat co'se o' his.

Dat evil sinner 's sot he face

Ginst ev'y wud I know;

Br'er Gabrul say, he 's fell from grace,

An' Hell is got him sho'!

He don' believe in sperits,

'Skusin' 't is out a jug!

Say 'tain' got no mo' merits

Den a ole half-cured lug;

'N' dat white cat I see right late,

One evelin' nigh de grave-yard gate,

ZEKYL'S INFIDELITY

Warn't nuttin' sep some ole cat whar
Wuz sot on suppin' off old hyah.

He 'oont allow a rooster
By crowin' in folks' do',
Kin bring death dyah; and useter
Say, he wish mine would crow.
An' he even say, a hin mout try,
Sep woman-folks would git so spry,
An' want to stick deeselves up den,
An' try to crow over de men.

'E say 't ain' no good in preachin';
Dat niggers is sich fools—
Don' know no mo' 'bout teachin'
'N white-folks does 'bout mules;
An' when br'er Gabrul's hollered tell
You mos' kin see right into Hell,
An' rambled Scriptures fit to bus',
Dat hard-mouf nigger 's wus an' wus.

'E say quality (dis is mainer
'N all Ise told you yit) —
Says 'tain' no better 'n 'arf-strainer;
An' dat *his* master 'll git

ZEKYL'S INFIDELITY

Good place in Heaven—po'-white-folks, mark!—
As y' all whar come right out de ark;
An' dat—now jes' heah dis!—dat he,
A po'-white-folks' nigger 's good as *me*!

He 's gwine straight to de deble!
An' sarve him jes' right, too!
He 's a outdacious rebel,
Arter all Ise done do!—
Ise sweat an' arguified an' blowed
Over dat black nigger mo'
'N would 'a' teck a c'nal-boat load
Over to Canyan sho'!

Ise tried *refection*—'t warn' no whar!
Ise wrastled wid de Lord in pra'r;
Ise quoiled tell I wuz mos daid;
Ise th'owed de spider at his haid—
But he ole haid 't wuz so thick th'oo
Hit bus' my skillit spang in two.

You kin dye black hyah an' meek it light;
You kin tu'n de Ethiope's spots to white;
You mout grow two or three cubics bigger—
But you carn't onchange a po'-white-folks' nigger.

ZEKYL'S INFIDELITY

When you 's dwellin' on golden harps an' chunes,
A po-white-folks' nigger's thinkin' bout coons;
An' when you 's sniffin' de heaven'y blossoms,
A po'-white-folks' nigger 's studyin' 'bout possums.

MARSE PHIL

YES, yes, you is Marse Phil's son; you favor 'm
might'ly, too.

We wuz like brothers, we wuz, me an' him.
You tried to fool d' ole nigger, but, Marster, 't wouldn'
do;

Not do yo' is done growed so tall an' slim.

Hi! Lord! Ise knowed yo', honey, sence long befo'
yo' born—

I mean, Ise knowed de *family* dat long;
An' dees been *white* folks, Marster—dee han 's white
ez young corn—

An', ef dee want to, couldn' do no wrong.

You' gran'pa bought my mammy at Gen'l Nelson's
sale,

An' Deely she come out de same estate;
An' blood is jes' like pra'r is—hit tain' gwine nuver
fail;

Hit 's sutney gwine to come out, soon or late.

MARSE PHIL

When I wuz born, yo' gran'pa gi' me to young Marse
Phil,

To be his body-servant—like, you know;
An' we growed up together like two stalks in a hill—
Bofe tarslin' an' den shootin' in de row.

Marse Phil wuz born in harves', an' I dat Christmas
come;

My mammy nussed bofe on we de same time;
No matter what one got, suh, de oder gwine git
some—

We wuz two fibe-cent pieces in one dime.

We cotch ole hyahs together, an' possums, him an'
me;

We fished dat mill-pon' over, night an' day;
Rid horses to de water; treed coons up de same tree;
An' when you see one, turr warn' fur away.

When Marse Phil went to College, 't wuz, "Sam—
Sam 's got to go."

Ole Marster said, "Dat boy 's a fool 'bout Sam."
Ole Mistis jes' said, "Dear, Phil wants him, an', you
know—"

Dat "*Dear*"—hit used to soothe him like a lamb.

MARSE PHIL

So we all went to College—'way down to Williams-
burg—

But 't warn' much l'arnin out o' books we got;
Dem urrs warn' no mo' to him 'n a ole wormy lug;
Yes, suh, we wuz de ve'y top-de-pot.

An' ef he didn' study dem Latins an' sich things,
He wuz de popularetis all de while
De ladies use' to call him, "De angel widout wings";
An' when he come, I lay dee use' to smile.

Yo' see, he wuz ole Marster's only chile; an' den,
He had a *body-servant*—at he will;
An' wid dat big plantation; dee 'd all like to be
brides;
Dat is ef dee could have de groom, Marse Phil.

'T wuz dyah he met young Mistis—she wuz yo' ma,
of co'se!

I disremembers now what mont' it wuz:
One night, he comes, an' seys he, "Sam, I needs new
clo'es";
An' seys I, "Marse Phil, yes, suh, so yo' does."

MARSE PHIL

Well, suh, he made de tailor meck ev'y thing bran'
new;

He would n' w'ar one stitch he had on han'—
Jes' throwed 'em in de chip box, an' seys, "Sam,
dem 's fur you."

Marse Phil, I tell yo', wuz a gentleman.

So Marse Phil co'tes de Mistis, an' Sam he co'tes de
maid—

We always sot our traps upon one parf;
An' when we tole ole Marster we bofe wuz gwine, he
seyd,

"All right, we 'll have to kill de fatted calf."

An' dat wuz what dee did, suh—de Prodigal wuz
home;

Dee put de ring an' robe upon yo' ma.

Den you wuz born, young Marster, an' den de storm
hit come;

An' den de darkness settled from afar.

De storm hit comed an' wrenched de branches from
de tree—

De war—you' pa—he 's sleep dyah on de hill;

MARSE PHIL

An' do I know, young Marster, de war hit sot us free?

I seys, "Dat 's so; but tell me whar 's Marse Phil?"

"A dollar!"—thankee, Marster, you sutney is his son;

You is his spitt an' image, I declar'!

What sey, young Marster? Yes, suh: you sey, "It 's *five*—not one—"

Yo' favors, honey, bofe yo' pa an' ma!

ONE MOURNER

(FOR IRWIN RUSSELL, WHO DIED IN NEW ORLEANS IN GREAT
DESTITUTION, ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1879)

WELL, well, I declar'! I is sorry.
He 's 'ceased, yo' say, Marse Joe?—
Dat gent'man down in New Orleans,
Whar writ 'bout'n niggers so,

An' tole, in all dat poetry
You read some time lars' year,
'Bout niggers, an' 'coons, an' 'possums,
An' ole times, an' mules an' gear?

Jes' name dat ag'in, seh, please, seh;
Destrucution 's de word yo' said?
Dat signifies he wuz mons'us *po'*,
Yo' say?—want meat and bread?

Hit mout: I never knowed him
Or hearn on him, 'sep' when you
Read me dem valentines o' his'n;
But I lay you, dis, seh 's, true—

ONE MOURNER

Dat he wuz a rael gent'man,
Bright fire dat burns, not smokes;
An' ef he did die *destricute*,
He war n't no po'-white-folks.

Dat gent'man knowed 'bout niggers,
Heah me! when niggers wuz
Ez good ez white-folks mos', seh,
I knows dat thing, I does.

An' he could 'a' tetched his hat, seh,
To me jes' de same ez you;
An' folks gwine to see what a gent'man
He wuz, an' I wuz, too.

He could n' 'a' talked so natchal
'Bout niggers in sorrow an' joy,
Widdouten he had a black mammy
To sing to him 'long ez a boy.

An' I think, when he tole 'bout black-folks
An' ole-times, an' all so sweet,
Some nigh him mout 'a' acted de ravins
An' gin him a mouf-ful to eat,

ONE MOURNER

An' not let him starve at Christmas,
When things ain't sca'ce nowhar—
Ef he hed been a dog, young Marster,
I 'd 'a feeded him den, I 'clar'!

But wait! Maybe Gord, when thinkin'
How po' he 'd been himself,
Cotch sight dat gent'man scufflin',
An' 'lowed fur to see what wealf

Hit mout be de bes' to gin him,
Ez a Christmas-gif', yo' know;
So he jes' took him up to heaven,
Whar he earn' be po' no mo'.

An' jes' call his name ag'in, seh.
How?—IRWIN RUSSELL—so?
I 'se gwine fur to tell it to Nancy,
So ef I 'd furgit, she 'd know.

An' I hopes dey 'll lay him to sleep, seh,
Somewhar, whar de birds will sing
About him de live-long day, seh,
An' de flowers will bloom in Spring.

ONE MOURNER

An' I wish, young Marster, you 'd meck out
To write down to whar you said,
An' sey, dyar 's a nigger in Richmond
Whar 's sorry Marse Irwin 's dead.







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